UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Department of Psychology, Sport and Geography

Research Seminars 2024-2025

SEMESTER A

Day & Time: Thursdays (late afternoons and lunchtimes)
Location: in 1H279 in CP Snow (Student Zone), but see the seminar on 28.11.24

Date	Speaker / Topic	Time
17.10.24 Thursday	**Callum Cooper, University of Northampton** *Parapsychology: A Once Controversial Science?*	**16:00-17:30**
24.10.24 Thursday	**Jennifer Cooke, Kings College, London (now at University of Hertfordshire)** *The Synaptic Gene Study (SynaG) – a gene-first approach to autism*	**16:00-17:30**
07.11.24 Thursday	**Lia Kvavilashvili, University of Hertfordshire** *When do Christmas songs pop into mind? Effects of long-term priming on involuntary semantic and autobiographical memories*	**16:00-17:30**
14.11.24 Thursday	**Aaron Clarke, University of Hertfordshire** *Relationship between Cognitive Phenotypes of compulsivity and impulsivity and clinical variables in obsessive-compulsive disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis* **Andrew Paice, University of Hertfordshire** *Multiplication Facts and the Hebb Repetition Effect: Can we help children learn multiplication facts faster?*	**16:00-17:30**
28.11.24 Thursday	**Helen Payne, University of Hertfordshire** *Support for University Student Mental Health: Training for Teaching Staff* **Online seminar on Zoom**	**16:00-17:30**
05.12.24 Thursday	**Sam Coleman, University of Hertfordshire** *Some cases of unconscious sensations and of intersubjectively shared sensations*	**16:00-17:30**
12.12.24 Thursday	**Andrew Dunn, Nottingham Trent University** *Your body, my body, everybody, beach body(?)*	**13:00-14:30**

SEMESTER B

Day & Time: Thursdays (lunchtimes and late afternoons), except the seminar on 4 June

Location: in 1H279 in CP Snow (Student Zone), but see a different location on 13 February

Date	Speaker / Topic	Time
30.01.25	**Zoltan Dienes, University of Sussex** *Believed-in imaginings*	**13:00-** **14:30**
13.02.25 Room F414 in Health Research Building	**Jonathan Smith, Birkbeck, University of London** *Developing more complex designs in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*	**12:30-** **14:00**
20.03.25	**Alejandro Quiroz Flores, University of Hertfordshire (CRIPACC)** *Machine learning, domestic abuse, and the wider determinants of health*	**13:00-** **14:30**
27.03.25	**Dejan Draschkow, University of Oxford** *Immersive memory: Natural usage and spatial frames*	**16:00-** **17:30**
03.04.25	**Tom Buchanan, University of Westminster** *Individual differences in engagement with false information on social media: Who spreads lies online?*	**13:00-** **14:30**
10.04.25	**John McAlaney, University of Bournemouth** *Can you hack it? Power structures and group dynamics in hacking forums*	**16:00-** **17:30**
08.05.25	**Sonay Kucukterzi, University of Hertfordshire** *Atypical eating in obsessive-compulsive disorder* **Rosemary Hancock, University of Hertfordshire** *Resilience isn't enough: exploring the relationship between resilience and thriving at work for desk-based workers*	**13:00-** **14:30**
15.05.25	**Christopher Smith and John Weber, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada** From *'Date Rape' to Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA)*: Background, context, and preliminary findings from a scoping review of commercial test kits designed to detect 'knockout drugs' most commonly employed in contemporary cases of 'drink spiking' and 'chemical submission' in the post-Pelicot era **Online seminar on Zoom**	**16:00-** **17:30**
04.06.25 Wednesday	**Nicole Sugden, Charles Stuart University, Bathurst, Australia** *Forget the future? How personality, ADHD and depression influence prospective memory*	**16:00-** **17:30**

Speaker	Abstract
17.10.24 **Callum Cooper,** *University of Northampton*	***Parapsychology: A Once Controversial Science?*** Parapsychology is the science of human experiences and/or abilities, which if they are as they seem to be, are in principle, outside of the realms of conventional scientific understanding. This can include experiences of telepathy (a mind to mind interaction), psychokinesis (manipulation of matter without human touch, allegedly

	through mind alone) or even survival of human personality beyond bodily death – to name but a few areas. Dr Cal Cooper will discuss a brief history of parapsychology, some of his own experiences within the field, and some odd instances appearing to be 'telephone calls from the dead'.
24.10.24 **Jennifer Cooke,** *University of Hertfordsire)*	***The Synaptic Gene Study (SynaG) – a gene-first approach to autism*** Synaptic gene conditions, or "synaptopathies", are conditions that involve disruption to genes expressed at the synapse and account for between 0.5-2% of autism cases. They provide a unique entry point to understanding the molecular and biological mechanisms underpinning autism-related phenotypes. Phelan McDermid Syndrome (PMS), also known as 22q13 deletion syndrome, and NRXN1 deletions (NRXN1 ds) are two such synaptopathies. Whilst PMS often includes disruption to the *SHANK3* gene, implicated in excitatory postsynaptic scaffolding, the *NRXN1* gene encodes neurexin-1, which is a presynaptic cell adhesion protein. With both implicated in trans-synaptic signalling, it is proposed that alterations in synaptic development may play a crucial role in explaining the aetiology of autism. The Synaptic Gene (SynaG) study adopts a gene-first approach to comprehensively assesses these two syndromic forms of autism. The study compliments preclinical efforts within AIMS-2-TRIALS focused on *SHANK3* and *NRXN1*. The aims of the study are to (1) establish the frequency of autism diagnosis and features in individuals with PMS and NRXN1ds, (2) to compare the clinical profile of PMS, NRXN1ds, and individuals with 'idiopathic' autism (iASD), (3) to identify mechanistic biomarkers that may account for autistic features and/or heterogeneity in clinical profiles, and (4) investigate the impact of second or multiple genetic hits on heterogeneity in clinical profiles.
07.14.24 **Lia Kvavilashvili,** *University of Hertfordshire*	***When do Christmas songs pop into mind? Effects of long-term priming on involuntary semantic and autobiographical memories*** Having songs, words or images popping into mind or suddenly recalling autobiographical events from one's personal past are daily experiences that often go unnoticed due to their fleeting nature. In cognitive psychology, the former has been referred to as involuntary semantic memories or mind-pops and the latter as involuntary autobiographical memories. While research on involuntary autobiographical memories has been growing steadily over the past 25 years, the research on semantic mind-pops is very sparse and has focussed mainly on songs and music popping into mind, especially on so called repetitive "earworms". In this talk, I will describe several studies on both music mind-pops and involuntary autobiographical memories which investigated the hypothesis that even a brief exposure to a certain stimulus or information can result in long-term representation activations that may lead to a sudden experience of a Christmas song or an autobiographical event hours, days or weeks after the initial exposure to that information.
14.11.24 **Aaron Clarke,** *University of Hertfordshire*	***Relationship between Cognitive Phenotypes of compulsivity and impulsivity and clinical variables in obsessive-compulsive disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis.*** **Introduction:** This systematic review and meta-analysis explored the relationship between cognitive phenotypes of compulsivity and impulsivity and clinical variables in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). **Methods:** We searched Pubmed, Scopus,

	Cochrane Library and PsychINFO databases until February 2023 for studies comparing participants with OCD and healthy controls on cognitive tests of compulsivity and impulsivity. The study followed PRISMA guidelines and was pre-registered on PROSPERO (CRD42021299017). **Results:** Meta-analyses of 112 studies involving 8,313 participants (4,289 participants with OCD and 4,024 healthy controls) identified significant performance deficits on specific cognitive tests representing cognitive phenotypes of compulsivity (*g* = -0.58, [95%CI -0.68, -0.47]; k = 76) and impulsivity (*g* = -0.48, [95%CI -0.57, -0.38]; k = 63) in participants with OCD compared to controls. There was no significant difference in the magnitude of these cognitive phenotypes. Medication use and comorbid psychiatric disorders were not significantly related to these cognitive phenotypes. In addition, no associations were revealed with OCD severity, depression/anxiety, or illness duration. **Conclusions:** Cognitive phenotypes of compulsivity and impulsivity in participants with OCD appear to be orthogonal to clinical variables, including severity of OCD symptomatology. Their clinical impact is poorly understood and may require different clinical assessment tools and interventions.
Andrew Paice, *University of Hertfordshire*	***Multiplication Facts and the Hebb Repetition Effect: Can we help children learn multiplication facts faster?*** Can we make it easier for children to learn multiplication facts? In this talk, I present five experiments conducted across schools in the UK and Belgium, in collaboration with colleagues at Ghent University, where we explored how one particular finding from the Hebb Repetition Effect literature could be leveraged to enhance mathematical learning across French, Flemish, and English-speaking students. By re-grouping multiplication facts into sets that reduce 'item-overlap,' we were able to significantly boost learning efficiency for children, offering potential practical interventions for education. I will also discuss our dedication to open science and better scientific practices, using advanced tools like mixed-models, machine learning, and model comparison to ensure our data analysis was both rigorous and transparent. Additionally, I will highlight the challenges we faced, such as having a pre-registration which had inaccuracies, and so reemphasizing the importance of transparency in research and not perfection from the outset.
28.11.24 **Helen Payne,** *University of Hertfordshire*	***Support for university student mental health: Training for teaching staff*** In this presentation there will be an overview of an Erasmus+ funded project which is developing a training for university teaching staff to support student mental health (anxiety and depression). Four universities from across Europe are engaged in a bottom- up study to design the content for including in a curriculum for an e-learning platform for training teaching staff in supporting student mental health. Staff and students have been asked for their views on this topic. These were analysed to arrive at key components which each university partner has explored in depth and presented recently at our second international meeting in Rome. The next steps will be explained which includes the piloting of the training together with an accompanying handbook in the Spring. My research interest in student mental health bridges into my other research topic, an intervention entitled The BodyMind Approach which engages interoception to moderate somatic signals found in anxiety through experiential learning using mindful movement and the arts.

05.12.24 **Sam Coleman,** *University of Hertfordshire*	***Some cases of unconscious sensations and of intersubjectively shared sensations*** When it comes to sensations and their properties, or what philosophers call qualia, for example the itchiness of an itch, the taste of ketchup, the blueness of seeing the sky, it is standard for cognitive scientists to understand these properties as essentially subjective, in at least two senses. First, it is held that they cannot exist unconsciously - there cannot literally be, e.g., unconscious itchiness. Second, they cannot be shared - one subject cannot literally experience the ketchup taste another enjoys. By means of some theoretical arguments as well as examination of some real-life cases, I argue that in fact qualia are not subjective in these ways. They can exist unconsciously, and they can be shared between subjects. This bears on the project to understand how sensations relate to brain and neural processes, since one source of the so-called 'hard problem' of consciousness is the claim that sensations are subjective and thus cannot be explained by objective brain and neural processes.
12.12.24 **Andrew Dunn**, *Nottingham Trent University*	***Your body, my body, everybody, beach body(?)*** At puberty body shape and size changes under the influence of the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone. Genetic and environmental factors (e.g. diet, lifestyle, socio-economic circumstance) play their part too. At the same time, sociocultural influences promote different body ideals for women and men, with an emphasis on thinness/slimness for women and lean muscularity for men, that in some sense mimic an exaggerated version of nature's influence. In this talk I will present some work in progress, looking at what (straight, gay and lesbian) men and women think is attractive in a potential partner's body, and what they think a potential partner wants from them. Even if you are the sort of person that doesn't care what you or others look like, many people do, and it has implications for how we behave, and how we feel about ourselves and others.
Zoltan Dienes, *University of Sussex* **30.01.25**	***Believed-in imaginings*** People have to varying degrees the capacity to alter subjective experience such that it misrepresents reality in ways consistent with goals, and such that the misrepresentation can be sustained over at least minutes despite clear contrary evidence. That is, people have a capacity for phenomenological control. No hypnotic induction is needed for people to exercise this capacity; and its exercise can result in corresponding neurophysiological changes. People can use the capacity to fulfil requirements of social situations or personal needs. One prominent such situation is hypnosis. But there are others. Situations in life may also call for certain experiences, for example, encountering a spiritual world according to one's beliefs, projecting ki in esoteric martial arts, feeling the pain of other people, or feeling tingles from ASMR YouTube videos. These experiences can be constructed so that they seem to confirm the beliefs of all those involved. The capacity of ours to fool ourselves by changing subjective experience - so that objective reality is taken to be different from what it is - continually foxes scientists and everyday public to accept as real what are constructions; indeed, that is what it may have evolved to be for!
Jonathan Smith, *Birkbeck, University of London*	***Developing more complex designs in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*** Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a particular qualitative methodology

13.02.25	concerned with the close examination of individual lived experience. Recent years have witnessed a growth of interest in more complex designs in IPA studies. These draw on developments occurring in the social or human sciences more generally. However, IPA researchers are implementing these in ways compatible with and playing to the strength of IPA and thereby constructing studies which are pretty distinctive in their contributions. In this paper I will introduce each of these developments and illustrate them with studies conducted in the health and/or clinical arena. The approaches I will be looking at are: • Multi modal: including data collected in a non- verbal form, for example participants' pictorial representations. • Longitudinal: following participants through time. • Multi perspectival: examining an issue through the different lenses of participants with different perspectives on the topic under investigation. • Mixed methods: using IPA alongside a different method as part of a bigger mixed methods study.
Alejandro Quiroz Flores, *University of Hertfordshire* **20.03.25**	***Machine learning, domestic abuse, and the wider determinants of health*** This seminar presents recent research on unsupervised machine learning to discover clusters of domestic abuse perpetrators using data from Essex Police (Hadjimatheou et al. 2024). The analysis identifies several distinct profiles of suspects, including clusters of abuse that had not previously been 'on the radar' of domestic abuse services. The seminar takes this analysis further and presents a theoretical connection (and some data) between domestic abuse and health outcomes, such as nutrition and food insecurity. Altogether, it is claimed that domestic abuse, ceteris paribus, is part of the wider determinants of health.
Dejan Draschkow, *University of Oxford* **27.03.25**	***Immersive memory: Natural usage and spatial frames*** How we use working and long-term memory as we move through our environment remains poorly understood, since most laboratory tasks remove visual material while participants remain still and do not offer alternatives to relying on memory representations. In a series of virtual reality (VR) studies, we *investigated the* usage and properties of memory when reliance on memory emerges as a natural consequence of interactions with the environment. In the first part of the talk, I will present studies which characterize the spatial frames in which information is held and selected in working memory following self-movement in immersive environments. In the second part, I will talk about studies investigating a fundamental psychological function that is central to many of our interactions in the environment: "sensorimnemonic decisions" – when to rely on memories versus sampling sensory information anew to guide behaviour.
Tom Buchanan, *University of Westminster* **03.04.25**	***Individual differences in engagement with false information on social media: Who spreads lies online?*** False information on social media is a key problem facing modern society. Much of the spread of false information - misinformation or disinformation - relies on human action. Social media users share false stories to their networks, or engage with it in other ways that lead to algorithmic propagation. Yet, only a minority of social media users engage with false information in this way. What characterises these individuals, and sets them apart from those who do not? Understanding this question not only sheds light on the processes underlying engagement, but also has implications for measures to reduce the spread of false material. This talk will review findings from a series of studies over the last several years, examining the role of personality, cognitive style, motivations, and other person-level characteristics as predictors of engagement with false information.

John MacAlaney, *University of Bournemouth* **10.04.2025**	***Can you hack it? Power structures and group dynamics in hacking forums*** Cybercrime is a growing societal challenge, in part driven by a shortage of cybersecurity professionals. Research has been conducted into the psychological components of cybercrime incidents, such as the use of social engineering by cybercriminals in phishing emails or romance scams. However there has been less work on why the perpetrators of cybercrime become involved in these activities, and how this is influenced by those around them. This talk will explore these factors by presenting results from an ongoing analysis of discussions held on surface and dark web hacking forums that are used by cybercriminals. This will include how, despite their often-anti-establishment stance and anarchist views, users of these forums appear to adhere to community social norms and seek social approval and prestige from their peers. It will end with suggestions for how people with an interest in computing and cybersecurity can be engaged with to steer them away from cybercriminal activities, and to instead be encouraged to pursue legitimate careers in cybersecurity.
Sonay Kucukterzi, *University of Hertfordshire* **08.05.25** **Rosemary Hancock**, *University of Hertfordshire*	***Atypical eating in obsessive-compulsive disorder*** Sonay's PhD focuses on addressing atypical eating behaviours in adults with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Atypical eating behaviours refer to a continuum of eating patterns which deviate from what is considered typical or healthy. On the one end of the continuum are non-clinical eating behaviours, selective eating and food neophobia. On the opposite end of the continuum are more severe eating behaviours, which may warrant an eating disorder diagnosis, such as anorexia nervosa or avoidant-restrictive food intake disorder. Adults with OCD are vulnerable to developing atypical eating behaviours, however the presentation of these eating pathologies is not well understood. Sonay's PhD explored the presentation of atypical eating behaviours in adults with OCD, as well as adults of the general population who display high levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms. The research carried out adopted a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative studies to understand atypical eating behaviours in this group, from the perspectives of those effected, as well as healthcare professionals. ***Resilience isn't enough: exploring the relationship between resilience and thriving at work for desk-based workers*** The current turbulent economic context is forcing organisations to focus on how best to support their employees with limited resources. Both resilience and thriving at work have become common areas of focus. Existing research highlights the positive relationships each has with multiple work outcomes but has not investigated potential differences in the strength of the associations. This study considered if resilience and thriving at work might impact seven work outcomes differently: work engagement, career satisfaction, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, task performance, mental health and wellbeing. Nearly 300 people answered questionnaires measuring all the variables. Statistical analysis revealed that four of the outcomes (work engagement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction and organisational commitment) were more highly related to thriving at work than resilience. When controlling for thriving at work, resilience had almost no correlation with these variables. The study was replicated with a different sample with similar results. Organisations looking to build loyalty, satisfaction and engagement should therefore focus on providing a positive environment that helps their employees to thrive at work. Focussing on simply building individual resilience is not enough.

Christopher Smith and John Weber *Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador* **15.05.25**	***From 'Date Rape' to Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA): Background, context, and preliminary findings from a scoping review of commercial test kits designed to detect 'knockout drugs' most commonly employed in contemporary cases of 'drink spiking' and 'chemical submission' in the post-Pelicot era*** The case of Dominique Pelicot not only produced shock, horror and outrage on a global scale, but also led to renewed debates regarding drug facilitated sexual assault (DFSA). This paper thus begins by examining DFSA as a separate, predatory phenomena within the broader category of Drug-Facilitate Crime (DRC) and distinguishing between two different manifestations of DFSA. Defining central concepts throughout the scholarly literature on DFSA, the work then goes on to trace three recent forms of organized resistance to DFSA, illustrating each through use of concrete examples. These categories of resistance include: (1) direct action oriented, feminist social movements; (2) place-based socio-behavioral interventions, and; (3) commercially available test kits designed to detect the 'knockout drugs' most commonly employed in DFSA. Shifting focus to explicitly interrogate the range of harm reduction based DFSA 'test kits' on the market, the talk concludes by detailing the methodology and preliminary findings from the authors' ongoing scoping review of DFSA test kits, situating the scoping review as the first stage in a much larger, multi-phase investigation. Given the early stage of this research, coupled with the highly limited nature of scholarly investigation into this topic, the paper closes by posing a series of recommendations, and corresponding critical questions.
Nicole Sugden, *Charles Stuart University, AU* **04.06.25**	***Forget the future? How personality, ADHD and depression influence prospective memory*** Prospective memory, the ability to remember to execute intended tasks in the future, is essential for successful daily functioning. Lapses in prospective memory occur frequently in our lives and usually have minor consequences. However, in some situations (e.g., forgetting to turn off appliances) or clinical populations where prospective memory impairments are more pervasive, the consequences of forgetting can be catastrophic! There are some individuals who may be more prone to PM lapses or impairments, due to decreased executive functioning or certain personality characteristics. In this presentation, I will discuss studies that have investigated the Big Five personality traits (Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience, Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Agreeableness) and HEXACO dimensions (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness Versus Anger, and Openness) in relation to prospective memory. I will also discuss my findings on the effects of ADHD and depression on prospective memory concerns in university students. Additionally, I will talk about factors that might help us reduce our rates of forgetting in the future.

After the seminars, staff and students are invited for drinks and nibbles for an informal chat and follow up discussion with the speaker in the Psychology Staff Room in CP Snow (in 2H256).

All enquiries to: Lia Kvavilashvili (l.kvavilashvili@herts.ac.uk)**, Katherine Brown** (k.brown25@herts.ac.uk) **and Lindsay Bottoms** (l.bottoms@herts.ac.uk)